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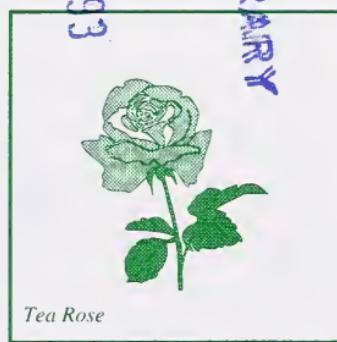
Program Aid Number 1261

The National Herb Garden

at the U.S. National Arboretum



Basil



Tea Rose



Aloe



Strawberries



Mint



Garlic chive



From Shakespeare's

"mickle is the powerful grace that lies in herbs" and the centuries old folk ballad's

"parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme" we have prized and written and sung about the marvelous qualities of herbs.

In ancient times, rue was believed to cure bald-headedness and inebriation. Rosemary was used to ward off the evil of witches. And nearly every herb imaginable was tried at some time or other to heal or cure or to concoct a love potion.

Migrating people, across time, have carefully carried along their herbal plants and seeds, which they valued for medicinal, savory, aromatic, or economic qualities.

And we still value them today for these qualities: We may take horehound drops to soothe our coughs; polish our furniture with marjoram and lavender oils; sip mint juleps or rosehip tea, and season the simplest or most elegant dishes with basil or tarragon.

Thousands of herbs could be planted in the National Herb Garden. Those you see here have been selected to demonstrate the significance of plants in human life.

Knowledge of herb uses is constantly increasing, and the plantings will be changed to reflect these uses. Gardens also change as plants flourish or perish, so the Herb Garden can never be static. But it should give you new ideas with each visit.

The Herb Garden covers about 2 acres (0.8 hectare) in a meadow opposite the National Arboretum's Administration Building. The design concept is of three separate but closely related sections—the Knot Garden, the Historic Rose Garden, and the Specialty Gardens.

Plant material masses, changes in elevation, and trellises are used to separate and at the same time integrate the gardens. All gardens are accessible by wheelchair.

You will enter at the reception area, which is a brick-paved terrace, about 50 feet (15 meters) in diameter, with a central pool. The terrace is surrounded by osmanthus hedges with collections of decorative herbs in semicircular beds. The view from the terrace is over the knot garden to the meadow beyond.



The Knot Garden

The classic elements of the knot garden design, which was fashionable during the 16th century in England, are carried out here. However, because of the large size of this garden, dwarf evergreens, rather than traditional small herbs, are used to create the intricate patterns of the knot.

The knot itself is about 25 by 50 feet (8 by 15 meters) in a larger 60 by 80 foot (18 by 24 meter) sunken space beyond the reception area. The formal knot expresses the traditional elegance of garden design that originated in Europe.

Three types of dwarf evergreens—cultivars of arborvitae, spruce, and holly—are planted here: *Thuja occidentalis* ‘Rheindiana Globosa’, *Picea pungens* ‘Montgomery’, and *Ilex crenata* ‘Helleri’. Their resins, barks, and needles have been used for medicinal or industrial purposes.

The Historic Rose Garden

Next, you will come to the Historic Rose Garden. It is about 50 by 80 feet (15 by 24 meters) and bounded by *Ilex* hedges on two sides, by an open grouping of airy trees of herbal value on the meadow side, and on the fourth side by a trellis-covered sitting area. These roses were chosen as representatives of roses long used for medicine, perfume, food, and pleasure.



Most of the roses in the collection bloom only in May or early in June.

Roses of historic interest and fragrant plants also surround a modern version of an ancient astronomical instrument—an armillary sphere. This decorative sphere can be used to tell “sun time.”

The collection includes varieties of French roses (*Rosa gallica*), Damask roses (*R. damascena*), Alba roses (*R. alba*), cabbage roses (*R. centifolia*), China roses (*R. chinensis*), and tea, moss, bourbon, hybrid perpetual, and species roses.

The Specialty Gardens

The third garden actually consists of 10 specialty gardens arranged along the perimeter of a grassy oval about 150 feet (46 meters) long. Inside the oval are small trees of herbal interest. Each specialty garden is separated by holly hedges, and each is large enough to contain a collection of special plants for teaching and studying purposes.

1. The Dioscorides Garden includes a representative herb selection from plants listed about A.D.60 by a Greek physician, Dioscorides. The modern science of pharmacology started with his efforts to list systematically the plants that were used as a basis for the early herbals still referred to in the 20th century. Planted here are aloe (*Aloe barbadensis*), anise (*Pimpinella anisum*), coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), and Butcher's Broom (*Ruscus aculeatus*).



2. The Dye Garden includes plants used for dyes in both the past and the present. Planted here are agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), indigo (*Indigofera tinctoria*), madder (*Rubia tinctorum*), and dyer's woad (*Isatis tinctoria*).

3. The Colonial Garden contains plants brought from the Old World by colonists, as well as native plants that were used in colonial times. Planted here are yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), chicory (*Cichorium intybus*), bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), and sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*).



4. The Native American Garden features herbs used by the Indians of eastern North America for a wide variety of purposes. Planted here are wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), Highbush blueberry (*Baccharis corymbosum*), and wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*).

5. The Medicinal Garden includes herbs used in modern medicine or plants for which alkaloids and other compounds have been synthesized for medicinal use. Planted here are Madagascar peel winkle (*Catharanthus roseus*), marshmallow (*Althaea officinalis*), mayapple (*Podophyllum peltatum*), and foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*).

6. The Culinary Garden is a collection of herbs used for flavoring and seasoning food. Planted here are basil (*Ocimum basilicum*), rosemary (*Rosmarinus spp.*), chives (*Allium schoenoprasum*), dill (*Anethum graveolens*), mints (*Mentha spp.*), and summer savory (*Satureja hortensis*).

7. The Industrial Garden includes plants that are sources of fuel, oil, pesticides, fibers, and other essential

products for modern industry. Planted here are milkweed (*Asclepias syriaca*), perilla (*Perilla frutescens*), licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), and sesame (*Sesamum indicum*).

8. The Fragrance Garden is a collection of plants that have historically been grown for their sweet scents and the pleasure they give. Planted here are rose geranium (*Pelargonium graveolens*), English lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*), clove pink (*Dianthus caryophyllus*), and clary sage (*Salvia sclarea*).

9. The Oriental Garden is a selection of herbs used in the Far East. Planted here are garlic chives (*Allium tuberosum*), hardy orange (*Poncirus trifoliata*), common ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), perilla (*Perilla frutescens*), chrysanthemum (*Chrysanthemum indicum*), and Japan pepper (*Zanthoxylum piperitum*).



10. The Beverage Garden contains plants used for teas or for flavoring liqueurs and other beverages. Planted here are hops (*Humulus lupulus*), mints (*Mentha* spp.), coffee (*Coffea arabica*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), and tea (*Camellia sinensis*). The specialty gardens are surrounded by trees and shrubs of herbal interest. Both native and foreign species, they have been most frequently used for medicines or dyes.

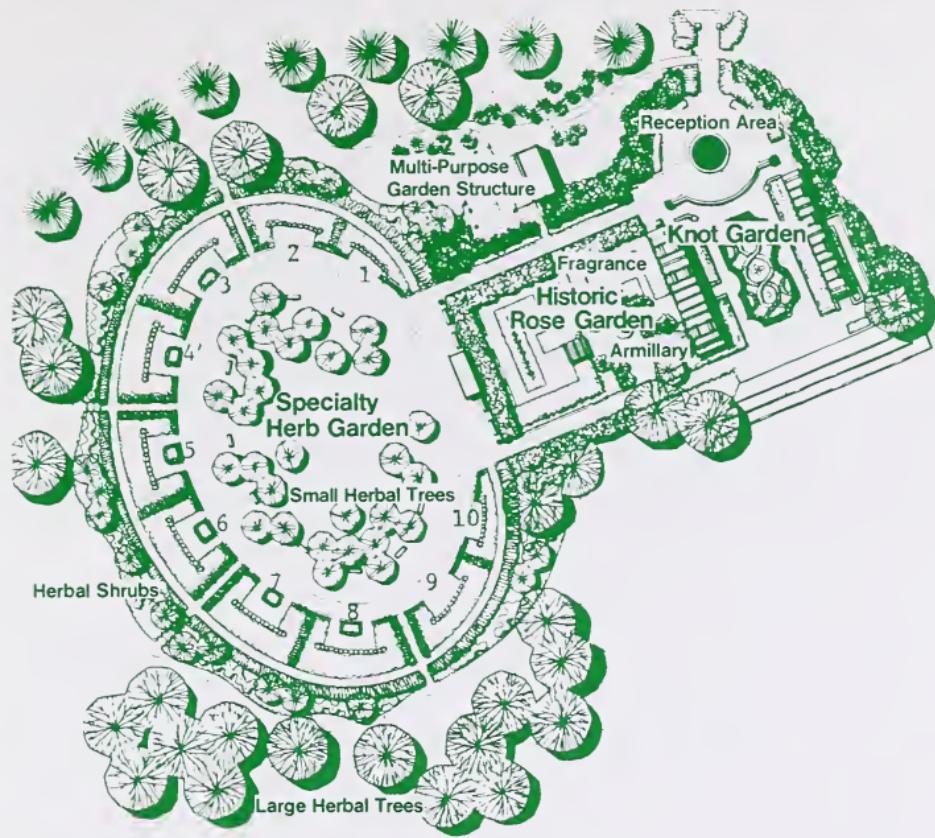


Related Gardens and Facilities

Other facilities associated with the National Herb Garden include a trial and propagation garden, which is a secluded area holding coldframes and compost bins. Here, new plants may be tried out and special propagation done. The Herb Garden Curator's Building houses an office for records and an area for potting and propagating. Along the walk in front of the trial and propagation area, a bed of *Capsicum* (hot peppers) displays the range of colorful variation in this historic culinary plant.

Origins of the Herb Garden

The National Herb Garden at the National Arboretum has been a joint project of The Herb Society of America and the Arboretum since 1965. In 1976, the Herb Society presented funds to the Department of Agriculture as a Bicentennial gift to construct the garden. The Herb Society



then raised the majority of the contributed funds, and Congress appropriated matching funds for the garden. Other donors include garden clubs, companies, and interested individuals. Construction of the Herb Garden began in 1979 and planting in 1980.

The Herb Society of America

The Herb Society of America, founded in 1933, is concerned with the cultivation of herbs and with the study of their history and uses; with their roles, both past and present as flavoring agents; as medicinal, fragrant, and dye plants; as ornamentals in garden design; as household aids; and as economic plants supplying sources of fuel, oil, rubber, and other essential products for modern society. The Herb Society of America is not medically oriented.

The U.S. National Arboretum

The U.S. National Arboretum is concerned primarily with conducting research on trees, shrubs, and plants of ornamental or useful interest and with educating the public about landscape and ornamental plants. It is part of the Agricultural Research Service, U. S. Department of Agriculture.



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